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Chapter 1. Social movements, contentious actions, and social networks: 'from metaphor to substance'?

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It is difficult to grasp the nature of social movements.¹ They cannot be reduced to specific insurrections or revolts, but rather resemble strings of more or less connected events, scattered across time and space; nor can they be identified with any specific organization, rather, they consist of groups and organizations, with various levels of formalization, linked in patterns of interaction which run from the fairly centralized to the totally decentralized, from the cooperative to the explicitly hostile; persons promoting and/or supporting their actions do so not as atomized individuals, possibly with similar values or social traits, but as actors linked to each other through complex webs of exchanges, either direct or mediated. Social movements are, in other words, complex and highly heterogeneous network structures.

Since the 1970s, analysts of social movements and collective action have tried hard to make sense of these structures, and their dynamics. That collective action is significantly shaped by social ties between prospective participants is not a recent² discovery (e.g. Pinar 1968; Booth and Babchuk 1969; Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978; Pickvance 1975; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980); nor is the view of social movements as networks linking a multiplicity of actors (e.g. Gerlach and Hine 1970; Curtis and Zurcher 1973). More recently, however, interest in the relationship between social movements and social networks has grown both in the range of the topics addressed, and the depth of the research results. Although not all

relational approaches to social movements qualify as 'network analysis', the claim that social network analysis at large has moved 'from metaphor to substance' (Wellman 1988) also applies to social network approaches to the study of collective action.

This book charts recent developments in this line of inquiry. As yet, the most massive set of contributions has dealt with processes of individual recruitment. Embeddedness in specific relational contexts has been found to be conducive to various forms of collective engagement (Oliver 1984; Kriesi 1988; Opp 1989; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Fernandez and McAdam 1988, 1989; McAdam and Fernandez 1990; Knoke and Wisely 1990; McPherson, Popielarz, and Drobnic 1992; McPherson and Rotolo 1996; Kitts 2000; Passy 2001b; Diani, forthcoming; Tindall 2000). Other studies have focused on the overall structure of networks in specific communities and their impact on the development of collective action, assessed both in terms of formal models (Gould 1993b; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Macy 1993; Oberschall and Kim 1996; Heckathorn 1996; Kim and Bearman 1997; Oliver and Marwell 2001) and in reference to specific empirical evidence (Gould, 1991, 1993a, 1995; Barkey and van Rossem 1997). Explorations of the networks-mobilization link in social movements have also prompted broader reflections on the relationship between structure and agency, and relational approaches to social theory (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Emirbayer 1997; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Emirbayer and Sheller 1999).

The structure of social movements has also attracted increasing attention. Studies in this area have focused on inter-organizational exchanges, whether in the form of coalition building (Rucht 1989; Diani 1990 and 1995; Philips 1991; Ansell

1997; Ansell 2001; Sawyer and Groves 1994; Hathaway and Meyer 1994) or overlapping memberships (e.g. Schmitt-Beck 1989; Diani 1995; Carroll and Ratner 1996; Rosenthal et al. 1985 1997; Ray et al. 2001). Others have focused on networking activities in social movement communities, whether 'real' or 'virtual' (Melucci 1984; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Whittier 1995; Polletta 1999; Hampton and Wellman 2001; Pickerill 2000). The intersection of individuals, organizations, and protest events over time has also been explored (Bearman and Everett 1993; Mische 1998; Franzosi 1999; Mische and Pattison 2000; Osa 2001). Network analysis has also facilitated the analysis of the role of advocacy groups, public interest groups, social movement organizations in policy networks (e.g. Laumann and Knoke 1987; Broadbent 1998).

The very expansion of network studies of social movements renders an assessment of the applicability and usefulness of the concept both an urgent and useful enterprise. The first reason for doing so is that empirical evidence is not universally supportive to the thesis of a link between networks and collective action. Several studies actually found a modest relationship between the two (Luker 1984; Mullins 1987; Jasper and Poulsen 1993). This has led some critics to reduce networks to a mere resource aside others (Jasper 1997: xx). The pervasiveness of network effects has also prompted claims that the concept had been stretched too far and thus made tautological (Piven and Cloward 1992). The simple acknowledgement of a relationship between social networks of some kind and the development of collective action (whether in the form of personal ties linking prospective participants to current activists, or of dense counter-cultural networks affecting rates of mobilization in specific areas) is no longer sufficient. Instead, it is important to

specify ‘how networks matter’, in relation to both individual participation (e.g., what is their relative contribution *vis á vis* individual attributes such as education or profession, broader political opportunities, or emotional dynamics? what types of networks do affect what type of participation?) as well as in relation to inter-organizational dynamics (e.g., what does the shape of inter-organizational links tell us about the main orientations of specific movements?).

Although the need for such specification has long been recognized (e.g. Snow et al. 1980), attempts to better specify the relationship have clearly taken momentum in the 1990s (Marwell and Oliver 1993; Gould 1995; Ohlemacher 1996; Kitts 2000; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Diani 1995, to mention only a few). This book charts recent developments in this particular line of inquiry and illustrates the centrality of these concerns to social movement research. There is also another ambition, though, namely, to provide a ground for intellectual exchange across disciplines and specific research communities. Besides asking ‘what do networks mean’ and ‘how do networks matter’, the book also addresses – albeit more indirectly - the question of ‘to whom [in the social science research community] should [social movement] networks matter’. We claim that they should matter to a much broader community than those identifying themselves as social movement researchers. There are already several instances of overlap. Important contributions to social movement analysis from a network perspective actually refer to empirical objects which would not automatically fall in the domain of social movement analysis, such as working class action (Klandermans 1984; Klandermans 1997), or participation in religious groups (Snow et al. 1980); other studies widely used among social movement scholars include investigations of participation dynamics in

voluntary associations (Wilson 2000; Anheier 2001; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

This book intends to contribute to cross-disciplinary exchange with those social scientists who do not consider the concept of social movement as central to their theoretical preoccupations, yet have a strong interest in the network dimension of political action at large (e.g., scholars of collective action: Heckathorn 1996; Macy 1990, 1991, 1993; Ostrom 1998; policy networks – Laumann and Knoke 1987; Knoke et al. 1996; Kenis and Schneider 1991; interorganizational relations - Galaskiewicz 1985; Podolny and Page 1998; Gulati and Gargiulo 1999; Pichierri 1999; social capital – Stolle 1998; Stolle and Rochon 1998; van Deth 2000; Prakash and Selle, forthcoming). On a more ambitious note, looking at the network dimension may serve to dispel some of the ambiguities regarding the idea of social movement and thus clear the table of issues which keep marring the debate, such as the relationship between movement organizations and interest groups (Jordan and Maloney 1997; Diani 2001; Leech 2001), or between protest and movements (Melucci 1996: ch.xx). Although this will not be the main focus of the book, it will represent one of the possible developments of our thinking on the issue.

It is not difficult to see why the concept of network has become so popular in the social sciences in recent times. Its flexibility, and in many sense its very ambiguity, enable researchers to deal with phenomena of change which are difficult to contain within the boundaries of formal bureaucracies or nation states, or at the other pole, the individual actor (Mutti 1996). Referring to networks provides a clue to assess from a relational perspective the social location of specific actors as well as to identify general structural patterns. The interest in the linkage between network

concepts, and social movement analysis may be located at least in three different intellectual contexts. The first one consists of the renewed interest in the meso-level in social analysis, and the relation between structure and agency. Attention to the ‘micro-macro link’ (Alexander et al. 1987) has fostered the study of the patterns of social organization (including social networks) which mediate between individual actors and macro social processes. The relation between the constraining character of social structure and actors’ capacity to affect it by adapting and modifying rules, meanings, and patterns of interaction has been addressed from several perspectives, from exchange theory (Coleman 1990; Cook and Whitmeyer 1992) to action theory (Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1977; Sewell 1992), from economic sociology (Granovetter 1973, 1985) to neo-institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) and attempts to reformulate theories of agency from a relational, network perspective (White 1992; Emirbayer 1997). In some cases, advocates of the integration of structure and agency have argued their cases by drawing explicitly on social movement research (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Livesay 2002).

The second important trend has to do with the resurgence of interest in ‘social mechanisms’ (Hedström and Swedberg 1998) as a corrective to invariant explanations and the search for law-like formulations.³ Rather than re-orienting social movement research, so far the attention to mechanisms has made more explicit what was already a relevant orientation within it, namely, the tendency to focus on specific dynamics relevant to the spread of social movement activity: among them, recruitment, framing, tactical adaptation of action repertoires, and of course networking. Attention to mechanisms has also brought about a plea for greater dialogue between the social movement community and cognate fields. This has

mainly taken the form of the search for mechanisms which could account for a wide range of political processes, most of which had been overlooked so far by mainstream social movement research, such as democratization (Tilly 2001; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). On the other hand, moving towards mechanisms has further strengthened the tendency to use the concept of social movement in purely denotative terms, that Touraine (1981) or Melucci (1996, but originally 1982) had long exposed. ‘Social movement’ is, in this perspective, merely the word to identify the set of phenomena (‘episodes’, in McAdam et al.’s [2001] words) within which the dynamics of substantive interest to researchers take place.

The third important process has been the consolidation of social network analysis as a distinct field in social science. To a large extent it is still controversial whether it should be regarded as a simple set of research techniques, a distinct perspective on society, or a scientific paradigm proper (Wellman 1988). Indeed, the analysis of social networks in the broader sense may also be conducted through approaches other than those usually associated with network analysis, including qualitative techniques (Wellman and Berkowitz 1988), as Jeffrey Broadbent’s chapter in this book exemplifies. Nor do structural approaches need necessarily to focus on networks – either ‘concrete’ or symbolic – between specific actors. According to an authoritative line of thinking, while network analysis focuses on individual actors and data, structural analysis looks at the patterns of exchanges between predefined groups which is very difficult to modify.⁴

Whatever the case, network analysis as it is best known developed with reference to a ‘realist’ view of social structure as networks which linked together concrete actors through specific ties, identifiable and measurable through reliable

empirical instruments ('regularities in the patterns of relations among concrete entities': White, Boorman, and Breiger 1976, p.xx). This view represented an alternative to both views of social structure as macro forces largely independent from the control of the specific actors associated with them (the working class, the capital class, the nation.....), and views of structure as aggregates of the individual actors sharing determinate specific traits (as, for example, in the political behaviour, survey-based tradition of research, where 'class factors' are frequently reduced to individual occupation).

Gradually, a different vision of network analysis has also emerged, which does not emphasize empiricism and concreteness, and highlights instead the inextricable link between social networks and culture. Following largely Harrison White's (1992) seminal contributions, social ties have been treated as consisting of processes of meaning attribution. In contrast to other versions of network analysis, which treat ties either as a precondition of culture or ideology (e.g. Erickson 1982) or as a product of a particular version of 'homophily' as shared cultural traits (e.g. McPherson et al. 2001; for an application to social movements, Diani 1995), here a linkage only exists to the extent that a shared discourse enables two or more actors to recognize their interdependence and qualify its terms: 'a social network is a network of meanings' (White 1992: 67). This perspective prompts a reflection on the relationship between social networks and the cognitive maps through which actors make sense of, and categorize, their social environment and locate themselves within broader webs of ties and interactions. Proponents of the cultural approach to social networks have engaged in sustained dialogue with sociological neo-institutionalists (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), encouraging developments in several specific areas,

from organizations (Carley 1999) to markets (White 1988; White 2002), from the study of the legal system (Breiger 2000) to literary analysis and the sociology of the arts (Mohr 2000). It has also prompted ambitious attempts to develop a relational perspective on sociology with a special focus on the notion of agency (Emirbayer 1997; Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

A The concept of network in social movement analysis

Social movements have been defined in a variety of ways. For some, they are the actors of central conflicts in society, embodying fundamental oppositions regarding the direction of the historical process (Touraine 1981). For others, they represent a peculiar type of collective action, characterized by identity, solidarity, and the attempt to break limits of compatibility of a given system (Melucci 1996). For still others they are little more than expressions of preferences, that movement organizations are supposed to mobilize and turn into real action (McCarthy and Zald 1987, even though they have changed their view of movements and got closer to Tilly's; see also Zald 2000). The most popular view at the moment is probably as sustained interactions between challengers and power holders (Tilly 1994).

Trying to associate networks to a particular conception of movements would make little sense at this stage. For all their differences, the definitions mentioned above all accommodate network mechanisms within their broader frameworks (Diani 1992). Moreover, we would risk overlooking the contribution that a network perspective can offer to our understanding of the multiplicity of levels of experience, usually found in processes of collective action and grassroots mobilization. It is therefore wiser to start by recognizing that a network perspective may illuminate

different dynamics which are essential to our empirical understanding of movements, from individual participation to interorganizational coalitions, from structural influences on mobilization attempts to the linking of events into broader protest cycles, and leave attempts to reconcile them in a unitary view of movements for a later stage (provided an integration should be needed at all, as many people in the field, including most contributors to this volume, seem to doubt).

A cautious approach also makes it more explicit that the empirical phenomena studied by ‘social movement scholars’ from a network perspective do not necessarily fall under a specific domain with clear-cut boundaries. For example, the chapters in this book which deal with the role of individual networks in collective action, do so by looking at organizations that need not be defined SMOs, and that one could refer to as ‘public interest groups’ (Passy’s environmental and peace organizations) or ‘revolutionary party’ (Anheier’s German National Socialist Party, an even more blatant case). Likewise, the study of networks between citizens’ organizations (see Diani, Ansell, and Osa in this book) has been studied by people who would not regard themselves as social movement scholars (e.g. Knoke and Wood 1981).

In order to follow some order in the presentation of the most relevant contributions of the social network perspective to social movement analysis in its inclusive version, it is worth referring to the conventional view of networks as sets of nodes, linked by some form of relationship, and delimited by some specific criteria. Although this framework is most frequently adopted by those close to the empiricist tradition rather than to the cultural one, it still leaves room for epistemological

debates on what should represent a node, a tie, or a boundary, and in this particular sense it is fully compatible with the latter.

Nodes may consist of individuals, organizations, and eventually – if more rarely - other entities such as neighborhoods (e.g. Gould 1995) or states (e.g. Breiger 1990). They may also consist of events, linked by persons, or, as in some recent application, even by elements of speech (e.g., Bearman and Stovel 2000).

Relationships may consist either of direct ties or indirect ties. We have direct ties when two nodes are directly linked in explicit interaction and interdependence — e.g., two activists who know each other personally, or two organizations who jointly promote a rally. We have indirect ties when a relationship is assumed to exist between two nodes because they share some relevant activity or resource— e.g., due to overlaps in their activists or sympathizers, or to their joint involvement in some initiatives or events. Relations may be single or multiple, depending on whether two nodes are linked by one or more types of relations, and they may also differ in term of contents, emotional intensity, strength. The definition of what constitutes a social bond is a huge problem in itself, and it is disputable whether it should stretch as far as the cognitive maps shared by people, or the exposure to a similar message, or cognitive framework (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). Boundaries may be defined on the basis of realist or nominalist criteria (see also Diani 2002). Nominalist criteria are predetermined by the analyst; in contrast, realist criteria includes in a given network only those nodes who happen to be actually related to each other by some kind of relation. The identification of nodes, of the relevant ties between them, and of the boundaries of the network represent fundamental steps in any study of network

structures.⁵ They will guide our discussion of what has been achieved in social movement analysis from a network perspective.

B Networks of individuals

Social movements exist in as much as individuals can be convinced to become personally involved in collective action, and be provided the opportunities to do so on a sustained basis. It is therefore unsurprising that substantial attention has been paid to the contribution of social networks to individual participation.⁶ As Doug McAdam notes in his contribution to this volume, the notion that prior social ties operate as a basis for movement recruitment, and that established social settings are the locus of movement emergence, are among the most established findings in social movement research. Typically, social movement activists and sympathizers are linked through both 'private' and 'public' ties well before collective action develops. Personal friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbors, may all affect individual decisions to become involved in a movement; so may people who share with prospective participants some kind of collective engagement, such as previous or current participation in other movement activities, political or social organizations, public bodies. Individuals may also be linked through indirect ties, generated by their joint involvement in specific activities and/or events, yet without any face-to-face interaction. These may range from participation in the same political or social activities and/or organizations, to involvement in the same subcultures or countercultures (e.g., the rave parties scene in the UK in the 1990s, or the gay and lesbian countercultures in the US: McKay 1996; Taylor and Whittier 1992). One

current critical area of debate is the extent to which exposure to the same media, whether 'traditional' (including television) or 'computer-based' may represent a social network link, and the impact of new forms of communication on social movement communities and the broader civil society (Rheingold 1993; Calhoun 1998; Diani 2000c; Norris 2002: ch.10). Even more fundamental is whether we should regard shared cognitive and cultural spaces as independent sources of links, and therefore as the basis for specific types of networks (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994).

Both direct and indirect ties may activate a number of mechanisms, which in turn affect chances and forms of participation. Networks may provide opportunities for action through the circulation of information about on-going activities, existing organizations, people to contact, and a reduction of the practical costs attached to participation. They may be the source of social pressure on prospective participants ('if you go, I will go too'), although we should not forget the possibility of cross-pressures (McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Kitts 2000), nor of opposite mechanisms, whereby people participate precisely because they expect others not to do anything (Oliver 1984). Networks may facilitate the development of cognitive skills and competences, and/or provide the context for the socialization of individuals to specific sets of values. They may also represent the locus for the development of strong emotional feelings (Taylor and Whittier 1995; Melucci 1996; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2000). It is disputable whether direct or indirect ties should operate differently, although in general social pressure is more likely to be exerted through direct links, while socialization to values or cognitive skills may also originate from involvement in similar organizational settings, regardless of strong

involvement with specific individuals.⁷ Whether strong or weak ties should matter most is also a matter of debate: one would expect strong ties to matter more in the case of high—risk activities (della Porta 1988) but weak ties may facilitate the contacts between a movement organization and a constituency with more moderate or at least diversified orientations, and/or the diffusion or the spread of a movement campaign (e.g. Ohlemacher 1996).

Most studies in this vein look at how involvement in networks affects individual behavior. It is much rarer that the overall configuration of networks linking individual activists is assessed in order to evaluate the potential for collective action in a given collectivity. Albeit indirectly, Kriesi (1988) attempted to do this while looking at the relationship between exposure to a movement counterculture and chances to sign a peace petition. This exercise usually clashes with the difficulty of collecting detailed data about a whole population of individual activists (Kitts 2000) and has therefore been frequently addressed through simulation data. Marwell and Oliver have been particularly active here, addressing the impact of centralization and cliques over chances of collective action (1993, pp.101-129). So have, among others, Gould (1993), Bearman and Kim (1997), Oberschall and Kim (1996), Heckathorn (1993, 1996) and Macy (1990, 1991, 1993; for a synthesis, Oliver and Marwell 2001).

The impact of individual networks on individual participation has been tested in reference to different dependent variables. These have included presence or absence of participation (McAdam 1986 1988; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Kriesi 1988; Opp 1989); decisions to jointly participate (McAdam and Fernandez 1990); participation in specific types of

activities, e.g., in conservation or political ecology groups (Diani and Lodi 1988); the continuation of participation over time (McPherson and Rotolo 1996).

However, individual networks also shape other important features of collective action. They may contribute to organizational formation, sometimes through forms of bloc recruitment (Oberschall 1973), other times by providing the necessary links between the founders. They may also provide the basis for factions and coalitions within organizations, and for the emergence of group leadership (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Zablocki 1980; Diani and Donati 1984; Zachary 1977; Krackhardt 1992). Looking at how members of a given movement organization interact with each other can also provide insights into its participatory rather than professional nature, the degree of internal division of labor, the subcultural elements of the group, the difficult balance between individual and group identities, etc. (Melucci 1984). Individual networks also represent the backbone of broader social movement communities, where interpersonal ties are often multiple, and may involve joint participation in mobilization campaigns as well as the sharing of distinctive lifestyles or of broader cultural models. While 'social movement scholars' have studied them mostly in reference to 'new' social movements (e.g., Melucci [1984] on 'movement areas' in Milan, Taylor and Whittier [1992] on lesbian subcultures, Kriesi et al. [1995, ch.xx] on gay subcultures, McKay [1996] on alternative cultures in the UK), working class communities continue to attract considerable attention from social historians and historical sociologists (Fantasia 1988; Savage 1996; Blokland 2001; Strangleman 2001). Communitarian ties operate at a minimum to strengthen the identity and solidarity among movement activists and sympathizers. At the same time, though, they provide the specific locus of social conflict in those

cases where the challenge is eminently on the symbolic side, where, in other words, at stake are mainly the definition of identities and the preservation of opportunities for the enactment of alternative lifestyles. Looking at networks may tell us to what extent certain lifestyles (e.g., fair trade businesses, microbotic food, exchanges of Vegan boxes, LETS schemes) reflect a distinct movement subculture or simply a niche of the broader market. This will depend on actual links between people and, most importantly, on their identities and representations.⁸

B Networks or organizations

Organizations are the other major node in social movement networks. It is actually very difficult to think of a movement as consisting of one organization, or at least as having one organization in a totally dominant position. When this happens, as in the instances of the Bolshevik party in Russia or the National Socialist party in Germany, it is more appropriate to drop the term 'movement' altogether and concentrate instead on the concept of political organization. Movements seem indeed to consist of multiple instances of collaboration on campaigns of different intensity and scope, with both the recurring presence of some actors and the more occasional presence of others. Direct ties between movement organizations include most prominently the exchange of information and the pooling of mobilization resources (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Rucht 1989; Diani 1995; Jones et al. 2001); indirect ties cover a broad range of possibilities, from shared personnel (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Rosenthal et al. 1985, 1997; Diani 1995; Carroll and Ratner 1996) to joint participation in specific actions and/or events (Laumann and Knoke 1987; Knoke et

al. 1996), from exposure to the same media, especially computer mediated ones (Bonchek 1995; Pickerill 2000; van der Aalst and Walgrave 2001) to shared linkages to third parties (whether private or public organizations).

A particular version of the inter-organizational approach looks at linkages between sets of organizations rather than individual ones (e.g., Bearman and Everett 1993, examine the links between types of political organizations in America over a long time, based on their co-participation in protest events in Washington DC). Others (McPherson et al. 1992) look at how shared traits of their members may have different types of organizations engaging in competitive relationships for support in the same socio-cultural space.

Sometimes, relationships between groups and organizations are recurrent to the point that one can think, for a given social movement, of a distinctive ‘alliance structure’ and ‘oppositional structure’ (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Klandermans 1990); other times this does not happen and *ad hoc* shifting coalition networks prevail. Always, however, the difference between a pure coalition, driven by instrumental principles (Lemieux 1997), and a movement network is given by identity playing a key role in boundary definition. Networks undoubtedly facilitate mechanisms like the mobilization and allocation of resources across an organizational field, the negotiation of agreed goals, the production and circulation of information, all activities which are also essential to any type of coalition, broadly defined; at the same time, however, they also may – or may not – facilitate the circulation of meaning and mutual recognition. It is the definition of a shared identity which qualifies a movement network *vis a vis* a coalition network, and draws its boundaries. The ego-network of a movement organization (i.e., the set of actors with whom an

organization has links) also usually includes actors that are not perceived as being part of the same movement or ‘family’ of cognate movements, but simple allies on specific causes. Inter-organizational networks and movement boundaries do not necessarily overlap.

The instability in movement boundaries is also reflected in movements’ internal structure. Movement networks usually reflect processes of segmentation; these may sometimes be attributed exclusively, or mainly, to principles of division of labor or the actual differentiation of issues, other times, more explicitly, to ideological conflicts and fragmentation (Ansell 1997; Melucci 1984; Philips 1991; Sower and Groves 1994). Differences in network patterns also reflect dynamics of centralization. To which extent are movement networks centralized or decentralized? What are the factors which account for some SMOs occupying specific positions in the network, either because of attracting links from many sources, or playing the role of an intermediary that connects otherwise non communicating milieus (Diani 1995 and in this book)? In all these cases, looking at networks may facilitate our understanding of the criteria, which guide organizations mobilizing in a movement in their choice of occasional and more permanent allies. Interest in these issues among movement scholars has paralleled similar developments in the sociology of organizations (Podolny and Page 1998; Gulati and Gargiulo 1999; Pichierri 1999; Kenis and Knoke 2002). Both have explored the factors behind alliance and coalition-building, addressing questions such as: what traits of nodes account for individual SMOs’ centrality or marginality in a network? How do preexisting ties – both organizational and between leaders (or managers/entrepreneurs in the case of firms) affect chances of new alliances to develop, or the location of specific

organizations in a broader organizational field? Answer to these questions also predict influence in the larger political system and attitudes towards collaboration with external actors (see Diani's and Ansell's chapters in this book).

B Networks of collectivities and events

There are also other types of networks, which we should consider when assessing the overall contribution of network approaches to the study of collective action.

Important insights have been generated by scholars focusing on collectivities and on the impact of their relationships on grassroots mobilization. In those cases, the dependent variables are not individual behaviors/choices, nor the location of specific organizations in a broader relational setting, but the levels of collective performance different social units can achieve. Along these lines, Gould has demonstrated how the interdependence between Parisian neighborhoods affected levels of resistance by the National Guard battalions in the 1870 Commune insurrection; Barkey and van Rossem (1997) have shown that the location of villages in regional networks in 18th century Turkey shaped their capacity to promote challenges to established powers, if largely conducted individually; Hedström and his associates have illustrated how opportunities of communication between districts in Sweden – operationalized through spatial proximity – affected the development of Trade Unions and social democratic organizations in the late 19th and early 20th century (Hedström 1994; Hedström, Sandell, and Stern 1998).

Other potentially interesting uses of the idea of network have only begun to be explored. One can for example think of network applications to the protest events

dynamics. Although the whole idea of protest cycle presupposes interdependence between events, and so do the techniques of event history analysis increasingly used in this area of inquiry (Koopmans and Statham 1999), the tendency to treat movements as aggregates of events is also strong (see e.g. Kriesi et al. 1995). The application of a network perspective could generate important insights on the process whereby events become a movement, through meaning attribution and recognition of commonalities, i.e., through processes of identity construction (Melucci 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2002). Events are linked to each other through innumerable mechanisms. Organizations operate as ties by promoting and/or participating in multiple events; individual activists operate in the same way; third, events may be linked through symbolic means, i.e., by representations that underline continuity between what could otherwise be largely independent and disconnected events. While the creation of a symbolic link between events is a heavily contested exercise, related to competition both between movement entrepreneurs, to secure property of specific issues, and between movements and opponents, trying to disentangle specific events from the movement's influence, the other two types of link are much more obvious. Through their action, both organizations and individuals stress the continuity between events. Continuity does not equate with perfect coherence, as there may be breaks and changes in strategies, but more broadly with a sense of compatibility between different instances of the movement experience. For example, one could easily reverse Bearman and Everett's (1993) data on the presence of different actors at demonstrations on Capitol Hill, Washington DC, to look not at the relations between types of collective actors, mediated by their joint participation

in protest activities, but at the linkages and continuities between the latter, mediated by different actors' involvement in them (more on this in Diani's conclusions).

A Structure of this book

How does our book cover the themes just outlined? We start with the most established area of investigation, looking at the impact of networks on individual participation and at the contribution of individuals to organization foundation. Florence Passy elaborates on previous contributions (McAdam and Poulsen 1993; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Kim and Bearman 1997; Gould 1995) in her search for specific network mechanisms at the individual level. She distinguishes between *socialization functions* of social networks, which create an initial disposition to participate; *structural-connection functions*, generating practical opportunities for involvement; *decision-shaping functions*, affecting the ultimate decision to take part. She explores these dimensions by looking at members of two Swiss political organizations, WWF and the Bern Declaration, and illuminating different dynamics in the two cases (Table 1.1 at the end summarizes the views of networks adopted in the different empirical chapters of this book).

Helmut Anheier explores the role of individuals in promoting collective action and organizational growth. His findings on single members of the Nazi party in 1920s-1930s Germany (i.e., members who operated in areas where there were no chapters and therefore acted as individual political entrepreneurs), qualify some of the propositions of mass society theory regarding the mobilization of extremism (see also Fangen 1999). Early Nazi activists were not marginal, socially isolated persons, but came from ordinary middle class backgrounds, and were embedded in

organizational networks: indeed, the stronger their embeddedness, the higher their chances of establishing a local chapter of NSDAP. On the other hand, their linkages were all within the extreme right subculture, and totally separated from mainstream politics. This is actually consistent with the claim (Kornhauser 1959; Lipset 1960; Linz 1967) that concentric circles (i.e., densely knit clusters of ties with little outside ramifications) rather than intersecting ones generate a fragmented society and are therefore an obstacle to democratic politics.⁹

The second section presents three chapters on interorganizational networks. Maryjane Osa explores changes in the informal networks of overlapping memberships between opposition organizations in Poland between the 1960s and the 1980s. When civic organizations are subject to severe constraints, as in Communist regimes, informal networks are particularly important as alternative sources of resources (Rose 2001). There, networks not only operate as micro-mobilization contexts, but also provide the basic infrastructure for civil society. Linking civil society and networks explicitly, Osa asks herself ‘What network characteristics are likely to facilitate movement emergence? Why are some networks less vulnerable to repression than others?’ Her answers are distinctive in that she explicitly brings a time dimension into her analysis, using individuals to chart the evolution of networks over time, and offering an accurate reconstruction of changes in the Polish political system as well as in the role of events with a strong emotional impact, such as the Pope’s 1979 visit.

Mario Diani’s focus is instead on interorganizational exchanges, analyzed with reference to Italian environmentalism in the 1980s. Despite the rhetoric on social movement networks being decentralized and anti-hierarchical, this is not

necessarily the case. Diani assesses the position of different organizations within movement networks in the light of two criteria, network centrality (Freeman 1979) and brokerage (Fernandez and Gould 1994). He argues that these measures reflect two different types of movement influence, based on the capacity to attract support for specific initiatives (*centrality*) and the capacity to connect sectors of a movement who hold different stances and worldviews (*brokerage*). He shows how these measures are differently correlated with indicators of external prominence like access to institutions and the media. He also discusses the conditions under which central and brokerage positions tend to be occupied by the same actors, as in the Italian case, or by different ones (as in the Australian women's movement: Sawer and Groves 1994).

Chris Ansell's chapter also deals with networks of environmental organizations, yet his investigation of the environmental movement in the San Francisco Bay Area has a different focus. While Diani's perspective is largely internal to the movement, Ansell draws upon literatures on collaborative governance, social capital and communitarianism, to explore the embeddedness of social movements in local communities. In principle, social movements could be regarded either as an expression of community embeddedness, strongly rooted in specific territorial spaces and the associated systems of relationships, or as attempts to build broader networks, based on the identification with a specific cause, which cut across local community loyalties and relations. Ansell is interested in exploring which of the two models is more conducive to collaborative governance: 'How does embeddedness in a particular territorial community or a particular issue-oriented community affect social movement attitudes towards collaboration? How does

embeddedness in a social movement subculture affect the attitudes of groups towards collaboration?’

In the third section of the book, we present three contributions which build on network concepts and/or methods to reformulate, from a relational perspective, classic concepts of the political process approach like alliance and oppositional fields (Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood), protest cycles (Pam Oliver and Dan Myers), or political opportunities (Jeffrey Broadbent, with a special focus on elites-movement interactions). Tilly and Wood present an unusual application of network analysis to collective action (see also Franzosi 1999). They do not use network analysis to map links between individuals and/or organizations and explain specific behaviors; instead, they use it to chart significant changes in patterns of relationships of attack and claim making among different social groups (including among others royalty, parliament, local and national officials, trade, workers) in Britain between 1828 and 1834. Building block models based on the intersection of actors and events, they map networks of contention before and after the passing of the 1832 Reform Act, which increased the centrality of parliament in British politics. They highlight the process by which people, through collective action, not only create new forms of political repertoires, but also forge relations to other actors, both at the local and the national level.

If Tilly and Wood draw upon massive historical evidence, Oliver and Myers adopt simulations to explore network mechanisms in diffusion processes and protest cycles. They unpack the idea of protest cycle and reformulate it in order to take the network dimension into account, focusing on three processes: the flow of information, the flow of influence, and the construction of joint action. They

introduce some important clarifications, noting that the repeatable and reversible nature of protest requires models of diffusion which focus on the spread of actions, and not the spread of ideas across actors (while a specific information, once diffused, remains permanently with the recipient, involvement in collective action is temporary and individuals may withdraw – and usually do withdraw – at later stages). They also emphasize the difference between diffusion and cycles: ‘Diffusion processes tend to generate waves or cycles of events, but not all waves of events arise from diffusion processes. Waves of protest can also arise from rhythms and from common responses to external events’. Another important factor is constituted by media logics. Even in the case of unbiased sampling, newspapers may generate fictitious cycles simply through random variations in coverage. Oliver and Myers find that ‘the effect of network structure varies greatly depending upon the nature of a particular network process’ and thus demonstrate the need for better specification of network mechanisms in our empirical investigations.

In his chapter, Jeffrey Broadbent presents a case for a network version of the concept of political opportunity structure. He focuses on a non-Western case of mobilization, namely, environmental protest in eight communities in Japan. This enables him to draw our attention to the fact that network analyses of mobilization are actually located in specific cultural and social contexts, with distinctive network properties. Embeddedness in specific networks shapes political action much more strongly in ‘thick’ societies like Japan than in Western, individualistic societies; in Japan, networks operate mostly in terms of block, rather than individual, recruitment, and this holds for both movements and elites. In particular, vertical ties between elites and citizen strongly shape local ‘political opportunities’: it is the presence of

'breakaway bosses' (i.e., local leaders who take the protesters' side) to prove the strongest predictor of success for collective action. Broadbent also contributes to the comparative analysis of mobilization processes by looking at his specific case through a broader and more ambitious theoretical framework, Integrative Structural Analysis. His model emphasizes the role of 'plastic' processes, by which he means those patterned dynamic processes which shape cultural, material, and social factors and link structural and agency levels.

Table 1.1 about here

The fourth and final section of the book consists of chapters by Roger Gould, Ann Mische, Doug McAdam, and Mario Diani. With different emphases, they all link network approaches to social movements and collective action to broader currents in contemporary social science, and identify possible future lines of development for research in this area. Roger Gould evaluates the contribution of the relational perspective to our understanding of individual activism by contrasting it to traditional rational choice thinking. Although available evidence consistently suggests a link between network embeddedness and participation, its insights have not been used in a way conducive to accumulate knowledge. This is due to a view of theory as identification of classes of phenomena, rather than as specification of explanatory mechanisms. Opting resolutely for the latter, Gould suggests we abandon the practice of adding new factors to our list of explanatory variables, and focus instead on the interactions between those variables. In particular, he exposes the limitations of rational choice reasoning by noting that future expectations are often difficult to

calculate and challenging the equation of social ties with prospects of future interaction. Alternatively, he emphasizes the dynamic role of activism in transforming lives and, by doing so, changing the meaning and the impact of the friendship ties in which prospective activists are involved. Gould nicely illustrates how discussions of networks and collective action can illuminate our understanding of ‘social conflict and cooperation in general’.

Despite coming from a fairly different perspective, Mische elaborates on this suggestion, by exploring the link between analysis of discourse and forms of talk and network analysis. In dialogue with recent developments in cultural sociology (e.g. Steinberg 1998, Mohr 2000), she looks at the forms of discourse generated by movement activists in response to the multiple relations in which they are involved. She reformulates networks as ‘multiple, cross-cutting sets of relations sustained by conversational dynamics within social settings’. Relations are constituted in conversational settings. While the literature on networks has mostly focused on cohesion paradigms, little attention has been paid not only to cross-pressures, but to the fact that in order to go beyond limited, local boundaries, movement activists need to break the limits of densely-knit groups and relate to much broader sets of prospective allies. Networks therefore are at the same time the location for the development of movement solidarities and for the transmission of messages, identities, etc. across movements. Mische identifies several conversational mechanisms that characterize the process of network construction and reproduction. She also proposes a technique, Galois lattices, to map the complexity of conjunctures of actors and events, in a dynamic way.

In what a distracted reader could interpret as yet another ‘epitaph to a successful (theoretical) movement’, Doug McAdam assesses the limitations of the structural paradigm for the investigation of the network-participation link, and invokes a greater role for cultural analysis in the identification of recruitment and mobilization mechanisms (McAdam et al. 2001). He proceeds to illustrate his general point in reference to three specific ‘facts’ regarding the origins of protest and contention, conventionally associated with the standard structuralist argument: prior social ties as a basis for movement recruitment; established social settings as the locus of movement emergence; the spread of movements along existing lines of interaction. For each of these cases, he identifies mechanisms which combine structural and cultural elements. Rather than rejecting the formalization and the quest for systematic patterns, to which network concepts and methods have so much contributed in recent years, he joins Mische’s call for a more dynamic integration of interpretative and structuralist research strategies.

Mario Diani concludes the book with a plea to re-orient social movement research along network lines. While looking at networks as a powerful precondition of collective action has proved a very fruitful exercise in its own right, one could also take the network idea further and make it the core of a distinctive research program. Diani argues that viewing movements as a distinctive type of social networks may reorient social movement analysis and help better specifying the relation between movements and related phenomena such as coalitions, solidarity campaigns, and political organizations. He then briefly sketches the basic traits of a research programme for the analysis of network dynamics within social movements, looking

first at different network patterns, and then identifying some analytical principles which also draw upon existing paradigms.

Notes to chapter 1

I am grateful to Jeff Broadbent, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly for commenting on a draft version of this chapter.

1 To refer to them, terms as vague as ‘flows’ (Sheller 2000) have recently been invoked.

2 Throughout this introduction, and indeed this book, ‘recent’ and similar words are to be understood in relative terms. It goes without saying that one could easily trace many of the ‘new insights’ discussed here well back in classic sociology (Simmel’s work on formal sociology and Marx’s historical writings on conflicts in France being just two most obvious examples).

3 Mechanisms have been defined as ‘a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’ (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: 11).

4 Blau (1982); Blau and Schwartz (1984). Some very influential works in the field of contentious politics (e.g., Gould 1995) are actually examples of structural analysis in this sense, rather than network analysis proper.

5 See Diani (1992b, 2002) for a more thorough presentation of network methods in reference to social movement analysis. For introductions to social network methods see Scott (1992) and Wasserman and Faust (1994). A useful glossary of network terms may be found at the following web address <http://www.nist.gov/dads/termsArea.html#graph>.

6 For thorough reviews of this field of investigation see Knoke and Wisely (1990); Kitts (2000); Diani (forthcoming).

7 McAdam and Paulsen (1993) show that direct ties do not count if people are involved in broader activities compatible with the type of participation to be explained.

8 For example, Melucci's project (1984) suggested that in the environmental field, networks developed in militant contexts had helped to set up natural food trade businesses, but that these largely identified with market activities rather than with a specific cause. In that context, the boundaries between movement community and market were vague at best.

9 Diani (2000b) presents a different reading of concentric circles, noting that political subcultures in countries like Italy, Belgium, or the Netherlands did not necessarily weaken democracy but provided distinct, previously excluded areas of society with political organization and opportunities for legitimacy.

Table 1.1. A summary of the empirical approaches presented in this book

Chapter	Nodes	Ties	Network concepts/measures	Dependent variables
Passy	Individual activists	Private ties (kin, personal friendship, etc.)	Ego-networks (presence/absence of ties; range)	Participation
Anheier	Individual activists	Public ties (associations, public bodies, etc.)	Ego networks (presence/absence of ties; range)	Organization founding
	Organizations	Joint activists		Structure of the right-wing network
Osa	Organizations	Joint activists		Structure of the oppositional network
Diani	Organizations	Exchanges of resources, information, etc.	Centrality in network consisting of overlapping memberships	Centrality in the interorganizational network
		Shared personnel	Centrality in interorganizational network	Regular ties to media and institutions
Ansell	Organizations	Exchanges of resources, information, etc.	Location in movement networks (structural equivalence)	Attitudes towards collaborative governance
Tilly & Wood	Social groups	Direct ties (Claims making) (Attack)	Centrality Structural equivalence	Structure of contention (alliance and oppositional fields)
Oliver & Myers	Virtual individuals in virtual collectivities	Simulation data	Density of the network Network structure (centralization)	Participation rates in different networks
Broadbent	Local communities	Links to local elites	Ties with elites	Protest success in different communities